

**Prisma vision paper**

**Response to HIV and AIDS**



**July 2009**

### **Status of the paper**

This document has been produced by the Prisma working group on HIV & AIDS in which staff of the following organisations participate: Bijzondere Noden/ZGG, Deputaten CGK, DVN, Dorcas, GZB, Oikonomos, Red een Kind, Tear, Trans World Radio, Woord en Daad, World Vision NL, ZOA, 3xM.

Several of these Prisma members have in the course of this project consulted their southern partners on this subject.

This paper is presented as a vision paper of Prisma that will function as a policy document for its members and a basis for consultation and discussion with the partner organisations and implementation in common programmes.

## Prisma vision paper on HIV & AIDS response

### **Introduction**

Prisma is an association of Christian development organizations that seeks to promote the quality of the work of its members. Common reflection and linking and learning are among the activities to realize that mission. One of the fields in which several member organisations are active is that of HIV & AIDS<sup>1</sup>. It is a field that confronts our members and their partners with many practical and ethical dilemma's.

Due to the dilemma's member organizations are confronted with in their activities regarding HIV & AIDS, it is necessary to formulate together a position on the topic in the form of a 'framework of understanding'. This framework can then guide member organizations in the shaping of their daily activities regarding HIV & AIDS.

The following short vision paper shows what this framework is about and reflects the position of Prisma regarding the main aspects it deals with concerning HIV & AIDS.<sup>2</sup> It will provide a brief overview of the main guiding Christian principles, the strategic policy decisions which flow out of these principles and lastly the practical approaches which will be used in response to HIV & AIDS.

### **Christian Principles**

As Christian organizations working in the field of HIV & AIDS our aim is an effective response to HIV & AIDS which is grounded in the Christian values of compassion, justice and stewardship. These values are based on the following Christian principles, found in the Bible, which also guide Prisma and its members in their daily work activities.

- 1. Human beings are created in God's image. Men and women have been created from the beginning with their different characteristics of sexuality, together reflecting in a special way the relationality that also characterises the Trinity. Gender, respect for each other and sexuality are very closely related. God has given love, sexuality, relationships and marriage as a blessing, to be enjoyed<sup>3</sup>. (Ephesians 5:21-33, Matthew 2:14, Proverbs 2:17, Ephesians 5: 31-32, Genesis 1:27-28, 2:24)*
- 2. We live in a world suffering from all sorts of pain, illnesses and evil. This is a consequence of unbelief and disobedience which destroyed the harmonious relationship with God, with each other and with nature. At the same time many people are longing for a sense of wholeness and peace. We anticipate this and try to live out the values of the restoration of God's intention for creation and for humans to be full image bearers of God, by serving others with our gifts, resources and talents.*
- 3. A Biblical attitude and response of compassion towards the poor, needy and sick (Matt 25:34-40, Job 29:11-17, Col 3:12-15, Rev 19:7,8). This includes rejection and decreasing stigma and discrimination and furthering caring attitudes towards people living with HIV.*

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<sup>2</sup> A more elaborate policy document has been developed in 2002, which can be found on the website.

<sup>3</sup> Also see the Prisma policy document on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

4. *A Biblical focus on discipleship -Christ-like behaviour-, promotion of positive behaviour and life style in all areas of life including sexuality and gender relationships.*
5. *A Biblical challenge, following the example of Jesus, to minister to the whole spectrum of human need. Therefore we aim to provide wholistic care, addressing a person's physical, psychological, social, material and spiritual needs and acknowledge their dignity by equipping them to serve others in spite of their own brokenness and pain.(Luke 4:18, Matt 25:34-36, James2:14-17, Gal 6:1,2 1 Pet 4:10,11)*
6. *A focus on family life and healthy relationships. Regarding families as the basic unit of society and as a long-term response to HIV & AIDS. Families, both nuclear and extended, provide the greatest potential for coping with the enormous task of caring for people affected by hiv & aids including the large number of orphans. This corresponds with both Christian and traditional cultural values in many societies. (Ex 22:21, Deut 24:17-21, 1 Tim 5: 3-4,8,16)*

And the following secondary principles derived from the Biblical principles

7. *A focus on the role of churches and Christian NGOs – to openly and transparently deal with the issue of sexuality, gender relationships, respect (boy-girl), cultural norms vs. biblical norms,to stimulate a Christ-like lifestyle especially for youth and adults and to follow its calling to care for 'orphans (and vulnerable children) and widows in their distress' (see James 1:27).*
8. *The development of indigenous leadership is vital in the response to HIV & AIDS. Community people and leaders should be encouraged and empowered to promote spiritual, moral and economic renewal to their communities. (see 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 1:5)*
9. *Advocacy for people infected and affected by HIV – to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves for the rights of the destitute, the poor and the needy. (see Proverbs 31:8, Micha 6:8)*

### **Policy strategies**

Based on the Christian principles Prisma has formulated several 'organizational principles' or 'policy strategies' which will guide the practical approaches that are mentioned at a later stage. The following 9 policy strategies have been developed:

1. Prisma recognizes the cultural setting in which its partners work. We acknowledge both the positive and the negative influence thereof on vulnerability and HIV. We want to strengthen partners in integrating authentic biblical values into the cultural settings and encourage biblical values to play a part in addressing the possible negative cultural influences.
2. Prisma promotes family values that encourage positive living, aimed at couples staying together and fidelity in relationships. Family-oriented interventions are promoted, where attention is paid to all members of the family including men, women and children.
3. Prisma seeks to enable people to make responsible and informed choices regarding sexuality, risk taking/-avoiding behaviour, relationships, and family life.

4. Prisma encourages comprehensive sexual education for children and youth through programs that offer values-based sex education, family life and life-skills training, as well as reproductive healthcare.
5. Prisma strongly recommends workplace policies that integrate an HIV policy for member organizations and partner organisations.
6. Prisma emphasizes the role of religion in societies. Effective approaches towards HIV & AIDS are sensitive and respectful towards religion. Religious leaders and institutions are uniquely positioned to address sensitive issues within society.
7. Prisma strongly condemns any form of sexual violence and abuse.
8. Prisma activities are in keeping with and linking to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), especially MDG 6 'combat HIV & AIDS and other diseases'. However Prisma's activities are not limited to the MDG's.
9. Prisma participates in coalitions that may include groups that do not adhere to the Christian values and practices to which Prisma subscribes. Prisma enters into these coalitions when such collective efforts can substantially contribute to the reduction of HIV transmission and the impacts of AIDS.

### **Core Responses to HIV & AIDS**

The section on 'policy strategies' provides a reflection of the policy decisions that Prisma adheres to with regards to HIV & AIDS. Based on these policy strategies this section shows how these strategies are translated into practice, through the approaches that Prisma supports in responding to HIV & AIDS.

1. *Comprehensive approach:* Prisma supports a comprehensive approach towards HIV & AIDS. Prisma<sup>4</sup> works in the areas of Prevention, Care and Support, Impact mitigation, Destigmatization, Advocacy, and the Participation of people living with HIV. (PLWH). An effective approach towards the HIV & AIDS pandemic requires a comprehensive strategy as indicated above. Prevention, support & care (including treatment), advocacy and impact mitigation of the pandemic are essential elements of an effective approach. These elements are interrelated, as each one of them affects the others.
  - a. *Prevention:* Prisma promotes sexual abstinence outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage. Recognizing that not all people can or will choose to be abstinent - and that even within marriages one or both spouses may be HIV positive and/or may have sexually transmitted infections, and/or may be unaware of their exposure risk - partner programs also include appropriate information and encourage reflection on condom use as a means to reduce risks and save lives. *Prisma supports the 'ABC'<sup>5</sup> approach' within the additional, broader SAVE<sup>6</sup> prevention model.*

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<sup>4</sup> Where Prisma is mentioned, it refers to Prisma member organisations and their partners.

<sup>5</sup> ABC stands for 'Abstinence; Be faithful; use Condoms

<sup>6</sup> SAVE is a response that was originally formulated by the leaders of the African Network ANERELA+ as a reaction to the shortcomings of the existing ABC method. In SAVE, S refers to safer practices (covering all the different modes of HIV transmission), A refers to available medications, V refers to voluntary counseling and testing, E refers to empowerment through education ([www.anerela.org](http://www.anerela.org)).

Other prevention activities include: Life skills promotion, peer education, comprehensive information, prevention of vertical (mother to child) transmission, promotion of safe injections and safe blood transfusions, and helping most-at-risk-populations transition to healthy lifestyles.

Regarding HIV and Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), Prisma supports harm-reduction initiatives, such as needle exchange programmes, but urges to combine these with drug counselling and rehabilitation.

- b. *Care and support:* Prisma stimulates, strengthens and supports community-led care initiatives for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and people living with HIV. Care also includes promoting and facilitating Anti-retroviral Therapy (ART) e.g. through partnership with other organizations. Prisma also supports the right of universal access to anti-retroviral drugs and other medicines to treat opportunistic infections at affordable prices and HIV friendly health care support systems at all levels of care.
  - c. *Impact mitigation and multi-sectoral approach:* It is essential to pay attention to the disastrous consequences of the epidemic, especially on (extended) family and community level. Prisma also encourages involvement of other sectors (external mainstreaming); more cooperation between specialist and generalist organisations (networking, linking and learning). Attention should be given to health care, education, food security, resilience counselling, economic development and microfinance sectors. In this context special attention should be given to orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) to develop into responsible adult citizens that become change agents to make a difference in their communities.
  - d. *Destigmatisation:* Stigmatisation and discrimination of people infected or affected by HIV & AIDS have caused, and still cause a lot of harm to individuals and families. Prisma encourages churches, religious leaders and also religious organizations to play an active role in addressing stigma and discrimination, and promote a supportive environment where everyone, including the poor and PLWHA and affected relatives, feel welcome and valued.
  - e. *Advocacy:* Prisma advocates at local, national, and international levels for the following issues:
    1. Expanding and strengthening social protection and care for orphans and vulnerable children
    2. Reducing gender-based vulnerability to HIV
    3. Increasing access to a continuum of care and treatment for people living with HIV
    4. Mobilizing resources for expanded HIV & AIDS response
  - f. *Involvement of PLWH:* Prisma acknowledges that it is important to involve the people who live with HIV, their families and their communities, in the development, implementation and evaluation of programmes in order to be effective. Their involvement also contributes to the empowerment of people living with HIV.
2. *Aids analysis:* Prisma realises the need for an analysis regarding HIV & AIDS in the working area where a programme is implemented (in addition to an actor and gender analysis) in order for a programme to be effective. Issues like prevalence, policies, contributing factors, role of the churches and other institutions in the area, other (I)NGO's in the area and their activities, should be addressed.

3. *Partnerships with Churches and Faith Communities:* Prisma works with networks of churches and faith communities, groups from other faiths and traditions, and individual religious leaders to reduce stigma toward PLWH and OVC's, and to further mobilise and enhance congregations' positive responses to the AIDS pandemic.
4. *Addressing Underlying Vulnerability:* Prisma acknowledges that the spread of HIV is to a large extent determined by the social, economic, political and cultural context and wants to address underlying causes of vulnerability to contracting HIV, including poverty, gender disparities, disability, repression, violence and food insecurity.
5. *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Prisma recognises that implementation of the response to HIV & AIDS must be accompanied by sound monitoring and evaluation. Prisma, through its member organisations and partner organisations, will encourage that best practices are documented, disseminated and (contextually) replicated.